



King County

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104
206-296-9600
Fax 206-296-0194
TTY Relay: 711
www.kingcounty.gov

September 29, 2014

The Honorable Mike O'Brien
Seattle City Council
PO Box 34025
Seattle WA 98124

Dear Councilmember O'Brien:

Thank you for your recent email regarding the County's Children and Family Justice Center (CFJC) project.

As we have shared with you in our discussions, the new CFJC project will provide efficient and safe replacement facilities for the current, inadequate court building, detention facility, and parking lot. The project will greatly enhance our ability to serve the public, including youth and families. It will expand our ability to offer innovative programs in the juvenile justice system by including a resource center, meeting and conference space that will be available to the community, flexible space that can be used as "transitional units" and diversion sites, and more.

The criminal justice system in King County has been and remains committed to using detention only in the most serious crimes and for high-risk offenders. That's how we reduced the average number of youth in detention from more than 200 in the 1990s to fewer than 60 today, even as the County's total population increased. Thanks to the combined efforts by law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, the courts, and detention, King County has one of the lowest incarceration rates of any urban county in the nation.

We've also taken action to address the disproportionate number of young people of color in detention. Our efforts have met with some success in that there are far fewer young people of color in King County detention today than when these efforts began in the 1990s.

We appreciate what you've done over the years as a member of the Seattle City Council to support our combined efforts to reform the local criminal justice system. Having strong advocates for a thoughtful approach to the criminal justice system has been critical to our success.

While we are proud of the results we have seen at decreasing youth incarceration, we know there is more to do. The following outlines our responses to requested items referenced in the email you sent us last week:

- A draft schedule for final design of the facility and its programming and the points where community members most impacted by the courts and detention facility have an opportunity to be involved;
- A presentation of the work and data collected to date about where racial disparities occur within the criminal justice system;
- A plan for how the county will institute systems or programs prior to the opening of the new facility that will reduce racial disparities in the juvenile justice system, including how the community will be engaged in this planning.

Addressing these points in order:

1. Opportunities for community involvement in final design and programming.

As there are still remaining milestones yet to pass on the project, we would like to share with you the draft project schedule, including final design for the facility and programming within the facility. Within the schedule, we have noted where there will be opportunities for the community and stakeholders to provide their input (especially those that may be impacted by the project) with the County.

- Draft project schedule for final project design, including opportunities for public input (assumes contract is signed in Jan 2015):

Date	Design Activity	Stakeholder Input
Feb-Jun 2015	Concept Reconciliation	
	(initial design review to ensure design build team's proposal is in compliance with the County's standards, guidelines and facility program; modify concept as required)	Neighborhood Advisory Committee Meetings County to host meetings with interested stakeholders
		Public Open House
		Seattle Design Commission Review

Jun-Oct 2015	Schematic Design	
		Neighborhood Advisory Committee Meetings
		County to host meetings with interested stakeholders
		Public Open Houses
		Seattle Design Commission Review
		Design Workshops: Neighborhood Targeted User Groups
Nov-Mar 2016	Design Development	
		Neighborhood Advisory Committee Meetings
		County to host meetings with interested stakeholders
		Public Open Houses
		Seattle Design Commission Review (as needed)
Mar-Jun 2016	Construction Documents	
		Neighborhood Advisory Committee Meetings
		County to host meetings with interested stakeholders
		Public Open Houses
		Seattle Design Commission Review (as needed)

As we have not yet completed design and we are still more than five years from completion of the facility, there has been only preliminary planning regarding the programming to be offered in the innovative spaces in the building including the resource center, conference space and transitional housing units. We will seek community input into the uses of these spaces when the land use approvals are completed, and as part of final design. Community input will be sought along the timeline and schedule laid out above, but will also include more targeted outreach to interested community groups and individuals beginning later this year and this outreach may well continue beyond 2016 when the construction documents are issued.

As you may know from the city's own construction projects, timelines can shift for a variety of reasons, including delays in the project due to approval processes and unforeseen construction setbacks. The above schedule is provided in order to assure you

that we have specific steps and a timeline for completing those steps, but like any construction project, the timelines can be subject to change. We will post regular updates to the project website and to interested parties who sign up for our contact list to inform the public of changes to this schedule and opportunities for input.

2. Racial disparities within the criminal justice system.

While there are fewer young people of color in detention today, a disproportionate number of those in detention are African American. Unfortunately, this issue is not unique to King County or this state for that matter. Please see the presentation in Attachment A of this letter for a summary of where racial disparities occur within the juvenile justice system and what the County and partner agencies are doing in response.

King County's criminal justice system has been actively working to address disproportionality within the systems we control:

- Beginning in 2004, King County was one of the first jurisdictions in Washington State to implement the model Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative. This nationally recognized and successful program is credited with much of the success in our system in reducing average daily population of African American youth in detention by 65 percent from 1998 to 2013 in King County. Under the auspices of the JDAI initiative, the County implemented alternatives to secure detention programs, and made policy changes to assure that detention is used in only the most necessary of circumstances among other reforms.
- Some of the County's more recent efforts include (1) the Prosecutor's 180 Diversion Program which gives many youth of color a second chance to avoid the criminal justice system by participating in an education program led by successful adults who share their own stories of challenges earlier in life, and (2) the Warrant Reduction program in South King County, a partnership with the YMCA to assist youth in getting through their court processes so that they can avoid warrants and detention, which were identified as a specific contributor to disproportionate minority confinement
- Looking forward, the County continues to seek new innovations in the criminal justice system. We are now partnering with the King County Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution and Seattle's Restorative Justice Initiative to move toward incorporating more restorative justice principles in our justice system which we believe will have a further significant benefit in terms of improving outcomes for young people in our system.

We know that the problem of racial and ethnic disparity cannot be solved by changes within the criminal justice system alone and King County continues to address the

underlying causes of criminal justice system involvement and detention. Here are some examples:

- Last week, Executive Constantine proposed a “Best Starts for Kids” levy. One of the goals of this effort is to reduce the demand for incarceration by investing in prevention efforts. This effort will focus on pregnancy and early childhood, school-age children and youth, and a “communities of opportunity fund.” The science makes it clear that these early investments are necessary and will yield positive results for future generations. By ensuring that every child born in our community has the best start in life and enters adulthood ready to succeed, we will decrease the need for detention for all residents, including young people of color.
 - For more information on Best Starts for Kids, please see the [Best Starts for Kids website:](http://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/initiatives/best-starts-for-kids.aspx)
<http://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/initiatives/best-starts-for-kids.aspx>
- The King County Strategic Plan and our Fair and Just ordinance – championed by the Executive and the County Council – requires that we intentionally consider equity and integrate it into our decisions and policies, our practices, and our methods for engaging communities. By doing so, we will create more opportunities for all of our residents. Our core vision as a government is to make sure that every person has a fair shot at success.
- Every year, King County produces an annual report on Equity and Social Justice that highlights the work being done by our departments and agencies to advance equity in our county. For example, see the [2013 King County Equity and Social Justice Annual Report:](http://www.kingcounty.gov/exec/~//media/exec/equity/documents/EquityReport2013.ashx)
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/exec/~//media/exec/equity/documents/EquityReport2013.ashx>.
- Our 2014 Equity and Social Justice Annual Report will soon be released. During his 2014 State of the County Address, King County Executive Dow Constantine highlighted building equity in our community as one of the greatest generational challenges of our time. You can look read more about the various ways King County is advancing equity by reading his “[Building a Shared and Sustainable Prosperity Policy Brief](http://www.kingcounty.gov/~//media/elected/executive/priorities/state-of-the-county/2014-sotc/policy-briefs/Policy_Brief_-_Building_a_Shared_and_Sustainable_Prosperty_2014-02-10.ashx)” from his State of the County Address:
[http://www.kingcounty.gov/~//media/elected/executive/priorities/state-of-the-county/2014-sotc/policy-briefs/Policy_Brief - Building a Shared and Sustainable Prosperity 2014-02-10.ashx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/~//media/elected/executive/priorities/state-of-the-county/2014-sotc/policy-briefs/Policy_Brief_-_Building_a_Shared_and_Sustainable_Prosperty_2014-02-10.ashx).

We still have a significant way to go to address our historical and current inequities, but we are convinced that in an environment of tight budgets, now more than ever we need to make sure that our policies, programs, and practices are efficient, address root causes, and provide everyone with access to the determinants of equity.

3. Statement of intent between the County and the City to continue to address racial disproportionality in the juvenile justice system.

We appreciate your willingness to partner with King County on this important issue as the City of Seattle has a significant role to play through its own law enforcement, early childhood and other activities. Please see Attachment B for a proposed statement of shared commitment. The County will utilize its ESJ toolkit for this work.

Many of these ongoing and future efforts to increase equity and social justice across King County will benefit from the new, better-designed CFJC, which will provide much-needed space to offer programs that help young people and their families succeed.

Members of the community around the facility have had intensive input into the design, which will be far superior for the neighborhood including community open area, a plaza on the 12th Ave side, and better circulation within and around the buildings, among other improvements.

We hope our responses above address your concerns, as well as convey our commitment to equity and social justice, and transparency and communication with the community.

Thank you for your work to improve our community.

Sincerely,



Dow Constantine
King County Executive



Susan Craighead
Presiding Judge, King County Superior Court

Enclosures (3)

cc: Seattle City Council Members
The Honorable Ed Murray, Mayor of Seattle
King County Council Members
The Honorable Wesley SaintClair, Presiding Judge, King County Juvenile Court
The Honorable Dan Satterberg, King County Prosecuting Attorney
William Hayes, Director, King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention (DAJD)
Pam Jones, Director, Juvenile Detention Division, DAJD
Jim Burt, King County Children and Family Justice Center Project Manager